

PSYCHOSOCIAL AND WORK-RELATED ADAPTATION

OF ADULT VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN MARYLAND

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to understand the experience of acculturation of adult refugees from Vietnam in order to learn about their adaptation in resettlement over time and after having left the resettlement system. The study included both psychosocial and economic/employment adaptation. This study was conducted by Drs. Dina Birman and Ed Trickett under contract with the Maryland Office for New Americans, Maryland State Department of Human Services. The main findings of the study are presented below.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- **185 Vietnamese refugees and immigrants resettled in Maryland who arrived in the U.S. as adults**
- **Sample of Convenience**
- **Average age:** 50
- **Average age of arrival in U.S.:** 39, range 20-59.
- **Average length of Residence in U.S.:** 10.5 years, range 9 months – 27 years.
- **Education:** 28.5% less than high school, 34% attended college, 7.5% finished trade or technical school.
- **Religion:** 81% some religious affiliation, majority Catholic.

DEPARTURE EXPERIENCE

- **Program under which left Vietnam and resettled in U.S.:**
 - Former Political Prisoners Program - 44%
 - As Boat People - 22%
 - Orderly Departure Program - 26%
- **Other countries:** 61% stopped in other countries before arriving to the U.S, staying there a little over a year on average. The most frequent stop was Thailand.
- **Former Political Prisoners:** Overall, a third of the sample (62) had been in Re-education camps in Vietnam before departure. They were predominantly male (57 male), older, and had experienced more traumatic events than the rest of the sample.
- **Refugees experienced a considerable amount of traumatic events prior to departure.** Most frequently experienced, by almost 50% of refugees, were lack of food or water and involvement in combat situations. Former Political Prisoners reported having experienced more traumatic events than those who were not detained in re-education camps.

ACCULTURATION

- **Acculturation** to American culture increases for refugees in terms of acquiring English and behaving in American ways. However, refugees continue to identify as Vietnamese and do not seem to identify more with American culture over time.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

- **Close personal relationships.** The overwhelming majority of close personal relationships among the refugees are with other Asians, most of whom (87%) are Vietnamese.
- **Sources of support.** The greatest support comes from spouse and family, followed by support from other Vietnamese friends.
- **Importance of Vietnamese friends.** Most refugees find work through their Vietnamese friends, and this is true even for the third job held since resettlement.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

- **Overall adjustment.** The refugees and immigrants are adjusting relatively well psychologically in the sense of being free of symptoms of psychological distress, satisfied with life, and reporting a low level of alienation from life in the U.S.
- **Psychological adjustment over time.** However, psychological adjustment may **worsen** with length of residence in the U.S. This was true for Anxiety, Depression, and Overall Distress Symptoms, as well as Life Satisfaction.
- **Gender.** Refugees who are women report more symptoms of psychological distress, as well as anxiety.
- **Trauma.** The number of traumatic events experienced, witnessed, or heard of was associated with increased symptoms of Anxiety.
- **Job Satisfaction** was an important predictor of Life Satisfaction and reduced Alienation, suggesting the importance of good employment for overall psychological adjustment of this population.
- **American identity acculturation** predicted fewer symptoms of Depression and less Alienation. Further American language acculturation predicted Overall Symptoms of distress, further supporting the benefits of acculturation for this sample.
- **Vietnamese behavioral** acculturation predicted Life Satisfaction, suggesting that Vietnamese culture continues to play an important and positive role in psychological adjustment of these refugees.

ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT

- **The overwhelming majority of adults are currently employed (85%).**
- **Positions held:** The majority work in skilled and semi-skilled positions rather than professional ones.
- **Socioeconomic Status:** On average, the socioeconomic status of respondents is **higher** in the U.S. than it had been in Vietnam. Thus, their employment situation appears to have improved as a result of migration.
- **Ways of finding work:** Resettlement and social services play an important role initially, but with time refugees rely more and more on their own job-searching skills. Vietnamese friends continue to play the most important role in helping refugees find work. In addition, the majority of the refugees (78%) have other Vietnamese as colleagues in their work place.
- **Job Satisfaction.** While the socioeconomic job status appears to grow with each successive job and time in the U.S., job satisfaction remains only moderate and does not increase over time.
- **First job in the U.S.** The first job a Vietnamese refugee accepts is critical in predicting the socioeconomic status of future jobs.
- **Former Political Prisoners (FPPs):** The current employment situation for FPPs does not seem to be different than for those who did not spend time in re-education camps.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- **Findings:**

- **Acculturation** to American culture increases for refugees over time with respect to language and behavior, but not to identity. Thus acculturation occurs slowly for this group, and refugees continue to have difficulties with the English language and other aspects of acculturation for many years after resettlement.
- Attachment to Vietnamese culture remains high and does not decline over time. In fact, in a sample who have been in the United States on average 10.5 years, the predominant set of social contacts, particularly in terms of the more intimate kind, remain among fellow Vietnamese. Further, Vietnamese friends are the leading source of finding jobs even for the third job held in the country. Finally, Vietnamese behavioral acculturation predicted Life Satisfaction, suggesting that taking part in Vietnamese culture behaviorally, i.e. shopping at Vietnamese stores, listening to Vietnamese music, celebrating traditional holidays, etc., plays an important and positive role in their lives.

- **Recommendations:** For these reasons, it is important that service providers recognize that acculturation and language learning take a long time, and appreciate the strength of this attachment to the Vietnamese culture. In particular, ethnic networks, i.e. contacts with other Vietnamese refugees are extremely important in the lives of these refugees. Resettlement agencies might consider drawing on fellow refugees in providing services, as ethnic attachments play such a significant role in the refugees' lives.

- **Findings:**

- **Economic adjustment** plays a crucial role in the adaptation of refugees to life in the U.S. The percentage who currently work is high (85%). While the socioeconomic job status appears to grow with each successive job and time in the U.S., over time refugee's job satisfaction remains only moderate. Nevertheless, it is higher than in Vietnam.

- **Recommendations.** Because job satisfaction is strongly related to psychological distress, alienation, and life satisfaction, social service and job placement agencies may need to explore a number of job placement strategies. These may include connecting refugees to other Vietnamese social networks that can help them find jobs, and assessing which types of jobs may yield greater satisfaction for the refugees, rather than focusing on the "first job, any job" recommended by some resettlement practitioners immediately upon resettlement.
- The first job Vietnamese immigrants accept seems critical in predicting the socioeconomic status of future jobs. This suggests that when agencies place refugees in jobs upon arrival, it is important to try to place them in as high a status job as possible.

The belief that the first job is irrelevant, and is just a temporary stepping stone to higher occupational success, is at best only part truth, at worst a “lock” into career immobility.

- **Findings:**

- **Traumatic events** experienced in Vietnam prior to their departure play an important role in these refugees’ lives. Indeed, the amount of traumatic events either experienced by or known to the refugee adults was considerable. Further, having experienced, witnessed, or otherwise been exposed to traumatic events was associated with increased symptoms of Anxiety.

- **Recommendations:** Since the impact of both psychological and physical trauma may continue throughout the refugee’s entire life, it is important that resettlement agencies identify these individuals and provide specialized and ongoing psychological and medical services.

- **Findings:**

- **Psychological distress** also appears to INCREASE with length of residence in the U.S., and Life Satisfaction to DECREASE, when the effects of other variables (education, gender, acculturation, etc.) have been accounted for. This could be due to the fact that psychological distress sets in at later stages of the resettlement process, when much of the coping with the initial demands of resettlement is out of the way; or the possibility that refugees are more likely to admit to distress and dissatisfaction the longer they've lived in the U.S.

- While in general refugees are adjusting well psychologically and economically, certain subgroups of the population may be at risk for maladjustment:
 - **Women** appear to be more at risk than men for psychological symptoms of anxiety and overall distress. This confirms findings with a range of different populations where women are found to be more likely to express symptoms of distress than men. These findings may be due to the fact that women are more likely than men to express (admit to) distress, or that they indeed experience greater levels of distress.
 - **Former Political Prisoners** (Detainees) represent an at-risk population, as they are significantly older than other refugees and have experienced substantially more traumatic events than the others. They are predominantly male, and require services that can address their unique circumstances. However, their employment situation does not appear to be worse than that of other refugees, perhaps as a function of slightly higher level of education.

- **Recommendations.** The resettlement system needs to appreciate the possibility that for some refugees psychological distress may INCREASE with time in U.S., making it important to have programs to assist them at later stages of the resettlement process.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The United States began the new century as it ended the old, by admitting large numbers of immigrants. In 2004, more than 11% of America's population is foreign born. In the past decade, immigration accounted for more than a third of population growth. Many of these immigrants enter with refugee status. Maryland has provided resettlement for large numbers of refugees in recent years, particularly those from the former USSR, Vietnam and a variety of countries in Africa. The Maryland Office for New Americans (MONA) has been responsible for aiding the adjustment of newly arrived refugees in Maryland through providing refugees with cash and medical assistance, employment services, and language training. Refugees are also eligible for federal public programs such as SSI, Medicaid, Medicare, and TANF.

While the intention of all these programs is to enable refugees to integrate successfully into the host society as soon as possible, after refugees leave the resettlement system, it has been difficult to track their longer-term progress. Past research done in other parts of the country has documented signs of long-term dependency and social isolation among some refugees (e.g., Hmong and Cambodians). However, the longer-term adaptation of varying refugee groups has not been extensively studied. Such information should prove useful in evaluating the long-term success of existing efforts and in enhancing the services provided upon resettlement, so that both immediate and longer-term needs of the refugee population can be addressed.

In response to this situation, MONA issued a contract to Drs. Dina Birman and Ed Trickett to conduct a series of studies designed to provide relevant information on the psychological and economic adaptation of refugees it has resettled since 1980. This report focuses on the third year of this project and deals with the adaptation of working age Vietnamese refugees. Earlier reports have focused on former Soviet Jewish adolescents, adults, and elderly, Somali children and youth, and Vietnamese adolescents and are available from the Maryland Office for New Americans. <http://www.dhr.state.md.us/mona/refugee.htm>

The report begins with a brief overview of Vietnamese refugees in the United States. Following this, the methodology, measures, and findings of the project are described.

VIETNAMESE IN THE UNITED STATES

Currently, the Vietnamese American community is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the U.S., with an estimated population of over 1,100,000 in 2000. Vietnamese Americans are the 4th largest Asian American group after Filipinos, Chinese, and Asian Indian Americans. Most came from South Vietnam after the government collapsed in 1975 under military pressure from North Vietnam. After the fall of Saigon, the first wave of Vietnamese, mainly ex-military and government officials and their families, fled to the United States. In the late 1970's, "boat people", primarily merchant Chinese and Vietnamese farmers, fishermen, and their families, left to escape worsening political conditions. While many died at sea, others reached refugee camps in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Hong Kong and, from there, were admitted to the United States. Concerned about the reported drownings and piracy, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees negotiated an agreement with the Vietnamese government for "orderly departure" to allow family reunification, yet additional boat people without family abroad continued to escape. In addition, the United States began accepting Amerasians, children born in Vietnam to Vietnamese women and American fathers. Finally, beginning in the late 1980's, the U.S. government was able to facilitate the release of many Vietnamese who, after the fall of Saigon were sent to "re-education camps" as political prisoners, where they often spent many years under harsh conditions. These political prisoners were then able to join family members in the United States.

Vietnamese refugees have resettled in various regions of the United States. Out of 50 U.S. states, Maryland is ranked as number 14 in total number of Vietnamese. According to Census 2000, Vietnamese refugees constitute 2.9% of foreign-born individuals in Maryland, totaling over 16,000 people. This resettlement has concentrated in the suburbs surrounding Washington D. C. and the Baltimore area. The sample for the present study comes from greater Washington D. C., the larger of the Vietnamese communities.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study was designed to assess the long-range adjustment of Vietnamese adults, as we had done previously with former Soviet Jewish refugees in Maryland. As with former Soviet Jews, our research has incorporated questions about demographics, including religious affiliation, acculturation, social integration into the American community, and social support, psychological well-being and economic adaptation. In addition, we inquired about the conditions under which our informants left Vietnam, including potential traumatic experiences there.

METHOD

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

The present study involved a sample of convenience of 212 Vietnamese adults living in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland. One hundred-eighty-five were selected for this report because they were adults—at least 20 years old—when they arrived in the U.S. Participants were recruited through networks in the Vietnamese community supplied by Mr. Huy Bui, currently Director of NAVASA, the National Association of Vietnamese American Service Agencies, and the Vietnamese research assistants Mr. Bui identified and trained to collect the data. These assistants came from different geographical locations in the two counties, were of college age, and had ongoing connections to the Vietnamese community. Once an initial sample was identified, a snowball technique was employed, using recruited participants to nominate others in their community who fulfilled the sampling criteria of having come to the United States as a refugee. The sample varied widely in terms of year of arrival in the United States and thus represents differing waves of Vietnamese refugees. Instruments were translated into Vietnamese and back translated by native Vietnamese speakers. Before translation, each of the instruments used in the study was discussed with staff members of Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Assistance Association (MVMA) to insure that the questions were appropriate for the Vietnamese community. We are indebted to Mr. Phu Le and Mr. Cuong Nguyen of MVMA and Dr. Han Nguyen of the Montgomery County Public Schools for the translation and back translation.. All data were gathered in the homes of the participants by bilingual interviewers.

FINDINGS

For each set of findings we first provide a brief overview statement, followed by highlights and then tables presenting the findings in more detail. As in all prior reports, in all subsequent tables, we use the following notation to signify statistically significant differences in the data: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$. NS is used when the difference is not significant, and + signifies a trend.

CHAPTER 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

The overall sample is described in Table 1A. Altogether we gathered data from 185 adults who had been at least 20 years old when they arrived in the U.S. Almost all (98%), were married and 61% were citizens of the U.S. at the time of data collection. They have lived in the U.S. an average of 10.5 years. The largest percentage of refugees (79%) came from South Vietnam. Great variability exists within the sample with respect to education. Of those refugees who reported their level of education, (N = 168 or 91% of the sample), 28.5% have less than high-school education, 34% attended college, and an additional 7.5% attended trade or technical school. Approximately a third of the sample (62 adults) had stayed in Re-education Camps in Communist Vietnam.

We also asked if adults practiced ancestral religion and what religious affiliation they currently have (see Table 1A). Overall, about 93% report some religious affiliation, with the greatest percentage being Catholic. In addition, over 80% practice ancestral religion, an affirmation of retention of strong identity and religious beliefs.

TABLE 1A: DEMOGRAPHICS	
Variable	Percent or Mean
Married	98%
U.S. Citizen	61%
Length of Time in U.S.	10.5 Years (range 9 months to 27 years)
Spent time in Re-Education Camp (Former Political Prisoners – FPP's)	62 (35%)
Place of Origin/Part of Vietnam:	
North	0.5%
South	78.5%
Central	19%
Did not answer question	2%
Education	
1) Less than high-school	28.5%
2) High-School	30%
3) Trade or technical school	7.5%
4) Partial College	15%
5) College	13.5%
6) Post-college education	5.5%

Practice ancestral religion?	81%
Religion practiced	
Buddhist	37%
Catholic	52%
Protestant	3%
None	2%
Other	.5%
Mixed	.5%
No response	5%

Table 1B reports separately on the demographics for those who had and had not stayed in Re-education camps, because large differences exist with respect to several variables. The majority of both groups came to U.S. as refugees, but the percentage of Former Political Prisoners (FPP's) who were refugees was significantly higher (88 vs. 68%). Former Political Prisoners were predominantly male (only 5 were female), and were older than the other respondents both at the time of data collection (54 v. 48 years old on average) as well as on arrival in U.S. (44 vs. 37 on average).

TABLE 1B: DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES Between refugees who did not and did spend time in Re-Education Camps (NON-FPP'S AND FPP'S)		
Variable	Percent or Mean	
	Non-FPP's (N =116)	FPP's (N=62)
Gender ***	38 (33%) male 78(67%) female	57(92%) male 5 (87%) female
Age ***	48 (range 33-63)	54 (range 39-65)
Age of Arrival ***	37 (range 20-56)	44(range 25-60)
Did you receive refugee status in U.S. **	68% Yes 32% No	88% Yes 12% No

CHAPTER 2: DEPARTURE EXPERIENCE AND TRAUMA

Departure Experience: Because of the overall importance of prior experience in the lives of these refugees, they were asked several kinds of questions about their experiences before entering the United States. Table 2A presents data on aspects of the departure experiences of these adults presented for Former Political Prisoners (FPPs) and other refugees. For the FPPs, the average stay in the camps was almost 5 years. The largest proportion of FPPs arrived under the Political Prisoner Program (67%), while 31% of others arrived under this program presumably as family members of FPPs. The largest number of those who were not FPPs arrived under the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) program (34%), and a substantial number came as boat people (25%).

TABLE 2A: DEPARTURE EXPERIENCE		
	Number (Percent)	
Came to U.S. under what program	Not FPPs	FPPs
Political Prisoner	36 (31%)	42 (68%)
ODP	39 (34%)	7 (11%)
Amerasian	4 (3%)	0
Boat People	29 (25%)	11 (18%)
ROVR	0	1 (2%)

With respect to other countries where refugees lived prior to coming to U.S., there were no substantial differences between FPP's and non-FPP's, so data in Table 2B are presented for the entire sample. Of all the refugees, 58% stopped at other countries before arriving to the U.S., staying there a little over a year on average. The most frequent stop was Thailand, and 19% of refugees stayed in more than one country on their way to the U.S.

TABLE 2B: DEPARTURE EXPERIENCE	
Stayed at another country before arrival to the U.S.	61%
How long?	13.5 months
What country (N=107) ^a	
Thailand	51%
Philippines	8.5%
Hong Kong	9%
Malaysia	5.5%
Indonesia	4%
Other	3%
More than one country	19%

Note: ^a = percent breakdown only for those respondents who stayed in another country
(N=107 or 58% of total sample)

Trauma: One aspect of particular concern involved the degree to which the refugees experienced traumatic events in Vietnam prior to their departure. Before deciding to include questions about possible prior traumatic events, we discussed the issue with Vietnamese service providers to ascertain whether or not they thought it was appropriate to ask about such potentially difficult issues. Their assessment was that it was not only appropriate but important to understand how these experiences affected the later lives of Vietnamese refugees. Thus we included in our questionnaire the Trauma Events Scale from the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (Mollica, Caspi-Yavin, et al., 1996). This scale, developed specifically for use with Indochinese refugee populations is comprised of 16 items describing a range of traumatic events, such as “Lack of food and water” and “Being close to death”. For each item there are 4 categories of response representative of level of exposure to a traumatic event: “experienced”, “witnessed”, “heard about” and “no”. Responses to this measure are found in Table 2C. The responses range from personally experiencing an event to witnessing or hearing about it, thus allowing a range of personal contact with the event itself. In addition, since recalling traumatic events may be upsetting, the questionnaire instructions specified that the participants should feel free not to answer; 16.5% chose not to answer the questionnaire.

Overall, the amount of traumatic events either experienced by or known about by the refugee adults was considerable. On average, refugees endorsed 7.5 of 16 items (item endorsement is considered indicating “yes” to either experiencing, witnessing or hearing about a traumatic event). They personally experienced on average 3.5 traumatic events. Most frequently experienced were lack of food or water and combat situation. Around 40% also experienced ill health without access to medical care and forced separation from family members. Almost 35% were imprisoned and 28% felt that they were close to death at one point, 24% experienced brainwashing, and 12% were tortured.

In addition to experiencing traumatic events personally, participants also witnessed an average of 1.7 additional traumatic events. The most frequently witnessed was seeing others in ill health without access to medical care, with lack of food, water, or shelter close behind. Least frequently witnessed were murder, rape or kidnapping.

Refugees report hearing about an average of 2.3 additional traumatic events. While most participants did not witness murder, rape or kidnapping, they report hearing most frequently about these crimes. Thus, awareness of these traumatic events was clearly a part of their everyday knowledge of the circumstances under which they were living.

TABLE 2C: TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES FOR ENTIRE SAMPLE				
	Experienced	Witnessed	Heard about it	Said No
	Percent^a			
Lack of food or water	48%	19%	13%	17%
Combat situation	47%	18%	8%	17%
Ill health without access to medical care	39%	21%	10%	21%
Forced separation from family members	39%	9%	8%	33%
Imprisonment	34%	12%	9%	34%
Being close to death	28%	9%	8%	41%
Lack of shelter	24%	20%	9%	32%
Brainwashing	24%	5%	16%	39%
Forced isolation from others	22%	10%	14%	41%
Torture	12%	5%	9%	52%
Serious injury	9%	17%	11%	46%
Murder of family or friend	8%	10%	18%	48%
Unnatural death of family or friend	7%	8%	18%	49%
Murder of stranger or strangers	3%	4%	28%	47%
Lost or kidnapped	3%	2%	28%	48%
Rape or sexual assault	0%	1%	20%	63%

Note: ^a = percentages across rows do not add up to 100% as some participants left some items blank.

Traumatic Events for FPPs: Because Former Political Prisoners have been noted to have been particularly severely traumatized in Re-education Camps, we divided the sample into those who had been in such camps (62) and those who had not. Table 2D compares the percentage of both groups who reported having experienced or witnessed traumatic events. As the numbers below demonstrate, Former Political Prisoners had experienced or witnessed considerably more traumatic events than those who had not been in re-education camps. Former Political Prisoners reported having experienced an average of 6 such events, compared to approximately 2 events reported by those without re-education camp experience.

It is interesting to note that all 62 of the Former Political Prisoners responded to questions about traumatic events. However, 34 respondents who were not detained in Re-Education Camps did not complete this portion of the questionnaire. We speculate that FPPs were willing to answer these questions because of the importance of traumatic experience to their lives in general, and to the U.S. program that ensured that they were able to be resettled in the U.S. By contrast, other refugees may have been reluctant to respond to these questions either because they felt they were too intrusive, or because they did not feel comfortable responding truthfully for other reasons. Thus, the results with respect to non-FPPs need to be interpreted with caution, as these data may

underestimate or exaggerate their experience of trauma. The data from the FPPs, however, represent our entire sample of those detained in Re-Education camps.

TABLE 2D: TRAUMATIC EVENTS EXPERIENCED OR WITNESED BY RESPONDENTS		
	Not FPPs (N responded = 82)	FPPs (Former Political Prisoners; N = 62)
	Percent	
Being close to death	26%	67%
Brainwashing	18%	54%
Combat situation	61%	79%
Forced isolation from others	17%	62%
Forced separation from family members	39%	76%
Ill health without access to medical care	54%	86%
Imprisonment	27%	89%
Lack of food or water	58%	87%
Lack of shelter	46%	58%
Lost or kidnapped	6%	7%
Murder of family or friend	12%	31%
Murder of stranger or strangers	4%	10%
Rape or sexual assault	2%	0%
Serious injury	22%	41%
Torture	5%	39%
Unnatural death of family or friend	10%	28%
Total Number of Traumatic events witnessed, experienced, or heard about (out of 16)	6.4	9.9 ***
Total Number traumatic events experienced	1.9	6.3 ***

CHAPTER 3: ACCULTURATION

Once arriving in the United States, the process of acculturation to life in a new land represents the overarching task of refugees. Acculturation, as we define it, refers to changes in behaviors, identification, values, language, and other aspects of one's culture as a result of migration to the new culture. We view acculturation as a complex process that involves both the new culture and the culture of origin (Birman, 1994). That is, refugees may acculturate to various aspects of the American culture while either retaining or shedding aspects of their culture of origin. Thus, we asked about how this acculturative process was unfolding.

Our assessment of acculturation includes three related though different domains: language, identity, and behavior. In the present study, as in our prior reports on Soviet Jews, we measured acculturation with the Language, Identity, and Behavior (LIB) Scale, used in our studies with Soviet Jewish adolescents and adults (Birman & Trickett, 2001; Birman, Trickett, & Vinokurov, 2002). The scale assesses acculturation to Vietnamese and American culture, both overall and in terms of specific aspects of acculturation.

- **Language Acculturation.** The Language Acculturation subscale was adapted from the Multidimensional Scale for Latinos developed by Birman and Zea (1996). It consists of nine items asking respondents to rate their ability to speak and understand English. Questions ask how well respondents speak and how well they understand the language with friends, on the phone, with strangers, and in other situations. Ratings are made on a four point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "very well, like a native." Since participants' native language was Vietnamese, we assumed fluency and did not ask respondents to rate their competence in Vietnamese.
- **Identity Acculturation.** This scale was based on items from the American Identity Questionnaire (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). We used a shortened version of the scale to assess the relative degrees of Vietnamese and American identity. It included four items which assessed the extent to which they consider themselves Vietnamese/American, feel they are part of Vietnamese /American culture, and are proud of being Vietnamese /American. Ratings are made on a four point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much".
- **Behavioral Acculturation.** To assess Behavioral Acculturation, the present study used a revision of a measure used by Birman and Tyler (1994), which in turn was based on the Behavioral Acculturation Scale (Szapocznik, Scopetta, Kurtines, & Aranalde, 1978). Eleven parallel items ask about behavioral acculturation to each culture such as: "How much do you watch Vietnamese (American) movies (on TV, VCR, etc)?"; "How much do you eat Vietnamese/American foods?"; and "How much do you participate in Vietnamese/American community activities?". Items are rated on a four point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "very much."

Data from the LIB are found in Table 3A. Overall, the retention of Vietnamese culture remains much stronger than the acquisition of American culture. In terms of different aspects of the acculturation process, refugees retain both a greater Vietnamese than American identity and participate behaviorally more in Vietnamese than American culture. Furthermore, refugees' retention of Vietnamese identity is higher than their participation in Vietnamese culture.

TABLE 3A: DIMENSIONS OF ACCULTURATION ON THE "LIB" ACCULTURATION SCALE (1=low level of acculturation, 4=high)		
	American Culture	Vietnamese Culture
Language	2.1	--
Identity	2.4	3.6***
Behavioral	2.3	3.2***

Acculturation over time: We also examined the degree to which length of time in the U.S. is associated with various indicators of acculturation (see Table 3B). Results indicate that length of time in the U.S. is not associated with Vietnamese acculturation, suggesting that over time Vietnamese refugees continue to retain a high affinity to Vietnamese culture. American identity also does not appear to increase with time in the U.S. However, with time in the U.S., Vietnamese refugees improve their knowledge of the English language and are more likely to participate behaviorally in the American culture.

TABLE 3B: CORRELATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERING ASPECTS OF ACCULTURATION AND TIME IN THE U.S.						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Vietnamese Identity	--	.21**	.01	.03	.07	.04
(2) Vietnamese Behavior		--	-.13 ⁺	-.08	-.14 ⁺	.02
(3) American Language			--	.09	.49***	.53***
(4) American Identity				--	.41***	.05
(5) American Behavior					--	.25**
(6) Time in the U.S.						--

Table 3B also illustrates a relationship between American and Vietnamese acculturation processes, by presenting findings of intercorrelations of the different aspects of the acculturation measures. American identity is not related to overall Vietnamese identity, suggesting that the two are distinct processes. This implies that as refugees acquire American identity they do not need to give up identifying as Vietnamese, and can have a bicultural identity. However, there are small negative correlations between Vietnamese behavior and American behavior and language. This suggests that the more one participates behaviorally in Vietnamese culture the less likely one is to engage behaviorally in American culture and speak English. Nevertheless, these

relationships are very small, and overall, acculturation to American culture appears to be independent of retention of Vietnamese culture. In this instance, acculturation cannot be described as “assimilation”; rather, these refugees seem to be preserving their culture while becoming more American at the same time.

Acculturation over Generations: The desire to pass identity down from generation to generation is generally considered to be an attribute of culture. Participants were asked how important was it to them that their children grow up to be Vietnamese, American, and identify as Asian, with respect to such components as identity, language, choice of marriage partner, and religious participation, using the same 4-point Likert format. Based on responses, a composite score for each of the three cultures was calculated (see Table 3C). Participants indicated that it is most important that their children retain their Vietnamese culture, more so than Asian or American, each of which were equally endorsed. Thus, the affirmation of a Vietnamese identity and the hope that their children would so identify remains strong in this group of refugees.

TABLE 3C: ACCULTURATION – FUTURE IDENTITY	
When your child becomes adult, how important is to you is it that he/she be	Mean (1=not at all, 4=very much)
Vietnamese	3.3
Asian	2.8
American	2.7

CHAPTER 4: SOCIAL INTEGRATION

One important aspect of acculturation to life in a new country involves the degree to which these refugees are integrating socially into the surrounding American community. To assess this, we asked them about their close social contacts with other émigrés from Vietnam, as well as with other Asian, White, Black, and Latino/Hispanic individuals. We assessed this by asking respondents to indicate how many people in the last 3 months in each of these categories they socialized with, had been invited to dinner by, or were their closest friends to. We computed percentages of friends in each category. Table 4 provides the findings involving social integration.

For the sample as a whole, 66% of social contacts over the past three months were with other Asians, most of whom (87%) were Vietnamese. When asked about being invited for dinner, a measure of closer social distance, the percentage of Asians grew to 93%, almost all of whom were other Vietnamese (92%). With respect to close friends, 83% were Asian, and among them, 9 out of 10 were Vietnamese. While some degree of social integration was found in terms of socializing with people outside of work (34%), only about 20% of the closest friends were not Asian and only 10% of social occasions in others' houses were not in Asian houses. In general, then, in a sample who have been in the United States, on average, 10.5 years, the predominant set of social contacts, particularly in terms of the more intimate kind, remains among fellow Asians, of whom almost all are Vietnamese.

TABLE 4: SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Question	Mean Percent
In the past 3 months, of the people you've socialized with outside of work, how many were: % White % Black % Latino % Asian % That are Vietnamese % Other	 17% 10% 7% 66% 87% 5%
Of the families to whose house you've been invited for dinner within the past 3 months, how many were: % White % Black % Latino % Asian % That are Vietnamese % Other	 4% 3% 1% 92% 93% 2%

TABLE 4: SOCIAL INTEGRATION (cont'd)

TABLE 4: SOCIAL INTEGRATION (cont'd)	
Of your closest friends , how many are:	
% White	14%
% Black	5%
% Latino	2%
% Asian	83%
% That are Vietnamese	91%
% Other	3.5%

CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL SUPPORT

Because of the importance of social support in the acculturation process, we assessed both the degree of social support experienced by these refugees and the sources of that support. To do so, we assessed the degree of social support at home, in the workplace, and in the neighborhood in the past 3 months. We used the structure and format of the Social Support Microsystems Scales (Seidman et al., 1995), used in our prior research with former Soviet adolescents and adults to assess perceived social support from different members of their social networks. We asked respondents about the helpfulness of 7 different providers of social support (spouse, family living with them, relatives, Vietnamese friends, American friends, colleagues, and neighbors) in terms of how helpful they are when refugees have a personal problem, need help with public programs or job, need money or other things, and, finally, how much pleasure they get from interactions with each of these social network members. The helpfulness of each of these individuals is rated on a 3-point scale.

Table 5 reports on the level of social support from the different sources averaged across the three situations. The greatest support comes from spouse and family, followed by support from other Vietnamese friends. Thus, the support pattern follows the social integration data in emphasizing the importance of fellow refugees as support providers. Less support is received from relatives, work colleagues, and American friends, community-based organizations and, lastly, neighbors.

TABLE 5: SOCIAL SUPPORT (1= no support, 3 = a great deal)	
Support received from:	Means
Spouse	2.8
Family Living with you	2.7
Vietnamese Friends	2.4
Relatives	2.0
Colleagues	2.0
American Friends	1.8
Community-based organization	1.8
Neighbors	1.6

CHAPTER 6: PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

One bottom line concern about the long-term adaptation of these refugees involves their psychological adjustment over time. We assessed three aspects of their psychological adjustment: the degree of alienation from this country they experienced, their level of psychological distress, and their overall life satisfaction.

- To assess **psychological distress**, we used *The Hopkins Symptom Checklist (HSCL-25)*. HSCL (Mollica, Wyshak, et al., 1996) includes 25 items measuring psychological distress on a four-point scale from 1 (not at all distressing) to 4 (extremely distressing): 13 items assess symptoms of anxiety (e. g., heart pounding or racing, feeling tense or keyed up, spells of terror and panic, etc.); 10 items assess symptoms of depression (e.g., feeling low in energy, blaming yourself for things, feelings lonely, etc.); and 2 items assess somatic symptoms (poor appetite, difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep). In these analyses, we used subscales that measure Anxiety and Depression separately, as well as the total score on this measure as an indication of overall level of psychological distress.
- To assess **alienation**, we used the Vietnamese version of the *Alienation Scale* originally developed by Nicassio (1983) for Southeast Asian refugees. It includes 10 questions such as "I feel awkward and out of place in America". Respondents answer on a four-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree).
- To assess **life satisfaction**, we used the Vietnamese version of the perceived *Quality of Life Scale* (Fazel & Young, 1988), which contains 14 questions about how pleased and satisfied people feel with certain aspects of their lives, such as family, house, health, and neighborhood. Questions are answered on a five-point continuum ranging from 1 (very unhappy) to 5 (very happy).

Table 6A shows the findings from these measures. With respect to overall psychological distress, the sample mean for the 25 items is 1.5, as are the Anxiety and Depression subscales, suggesting a low level of distress. In like manner, the mean score on alienation (2.2) is below the midpoint of the scale (2.5), again suggesting relatively low levels of alienation. The mean life satisfaction rating is 3.6 on a 5-point scale, which is positive. Thus, overall refugees report few symptoms, a moderate degree of alienation, and high satisfaction with life.

TABLE 6A: PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT	
Variables	Mean
Psychological Distress (1=not distressing, 4=extremely)	1.5
Symptoms of Anxiety	1.5
Symptoms of Depression	1.5
Alienation (1=low, 4=high)	2.2
Life Satisfaction (1=low, 5=high)	3.6

To identify which of the variables in the study (gender, length of residence in the U.S., educational background, number of traumatic events experienced, witnessed or heard about, job satisfaction, and American and Vietnamese acculturation) were most important in predicting psychological adjustment, we conducted analyses that allowed us to examine the unique contributions of these variables to the three aspects of psychological adjustment considered: symptoms of psychological distress, alienation, and life satisfaction.

The results were as follows:

- **Psychological Distress (HSCL-25):** Time in the U.S. was positively related to Symptoms of Anxiety, Depression, as well as the Total Symptom Score, suggesting that psychological adjustment may worsen with length of residence. Since these analyses controlled for age of the respondents, this finding suggests that this is not a function of age but of other factors associated with living in the U.S. Gender was related to the Anxiety and Overall Symptom measure, in the direction of women reporting more distress. The number of traumatic events experienced, witnessed, or heard of predicted symptoms of Anxiety, but not Depression or Overall Distress. Finally, American language acculturation (i.e. knowledge of English) was associated with reduced symptoms of Anxiety.
- **Alienation:** American identity and job satisfaction were significant predictors of reduced alienation. In other words, those who more closely identified with American culture are less likely to be alienated. Those satisfied with their current job are also less likely to feel alienated from American society.
- **Life Satisfaction:** Life Satisfaction appears to be worse for those who have lived in the U.S. longer. Job Satisfaction was also a significant predictor to Life Satisfaction, suggesting the importance of job satisfaction for life satisfaction more broadly. Finally, Vietnamese behavioral acculturation is positively related to life satisfaction, suggesting that those who are participating in aspects of Vietnamese culture are more satisfied with life.

TABLE 6C: PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

Dependent Variable	N (Df)	R²	Significant Predictors	Beta
Symptoms of Anxiety	122 (11,111)	.19*	Time in U.S. Gender Number of traumatic events experienced, witnessed, or heard of American Language Acculturation	.23* .25* .22* -.22 ⁺
Symptoms of Depression	124 (11,113)	.20**	Time in U.S. Job Satisfaction American Identity Acculturation	.19 ⁺ -.34*** -.16 ⁺
Total Psychological Distress	124 (11,113)	.19*	Time in U.S. Gender	.20+ .18+

TABLE 6C: PREDICTORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT

Dependent Variable	N (Df)	R²	Significant Predictors	Beta
			Job Satisfaction	-.31**
Alienation	129 (11, 118)	.25***	American identity acculturation	-.34***
			Job Satisfaction	-.21*
Life Satisfaction	128 (11,117)	.31***	Time in U.S.	-.28**
			Vietnamese behavioral acculturation	.19*
			Job satisfaction	.47***

CHAPTER 7: ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT

The importance of the work experience was central to our inquiry, not only because of its importance in terms of resettlement policy, but also because of the importance economic adjustment plays in the adaptation of refugees to life in the U.S. We gathered data on the work histories of these participants, the degree to which their jobs approximated the kinds of work they had done in Vietnam and their current job satisfaction.

Current Job Status

Table 7A provides an initial overview of the current job status of these refugees, and Table 7B provides a summary of the most frequently held job types. The percentage who currently work is high (85%). In addition, the average job satisfaction in their current positions is 3.4 on a 5-point scale, where 5 represents high satisfaction. Further, the majority (78%) have other Vietnamese as colleagues at their jobs, suggesting that social networks among them may be an important factor in finding work.

We also coded their jobs both in the United States and in Vietnam using a procedure developed by Entwistle and Astone (1994) to assess their socioeconomic status. The SEI, as it is called, assigns numbers from 1 to 100 which differentiate occupations in terms of their socioeconomic implications. The higher the number, the greater the status. For our sample, the average SEI score for current job was 38.8, and there was no difference between FPPs and non-FPPs (see Table 7A). Examples of the kinds of jobs receiving this approximate rating are mechanic, clerk, and food delivery worker.

In an effort to get a gross estimate of the difference in job status as a function of immigration, we also coded the jobs these refugees held in Vietnam using the same measure. We are quite aware that the status of jobs in the two countries may not be equivalent and that these calculations risk this possibility. Using this crude metric, the average SEI rating of the jobs held before immigration for the sample was 38. However, FPPs report a much lower SEI rating in Vietnam than non-FPPs. When SEI rating in Vietnam is compared to current SEI rating, the two ratings are similar for non-FPPs, but FPPs report a higher socioeconomic status in the U. S. than in Vietnam.

TABLE 7A: ASPECTS OF EMPLOYMENT	
Variable	Percent or Mean
Employed	85%
SEI Code of current Job	
Whole sample	38.9
FPPs	38.9
Not FPPs	39.2
Current Job Satisfaction (1 not at all, 5 very high)	3.4

SEI Code of job in Vietnam	
Whole sample	37.8
FPPs	30.2
Not FPPs	40.0
Job Satisfaction in Vietnam (1 not at all, 5 very high)	
Whole sample	2.0
FPPs	1.9
Not FPPs	2.1
Working with other émigrés from Vietnam	78%

Out of those who work, 105 people or 67% provided information on the type of work they do (see Table 7B). Refugees hold a variety of jobs, though the majority work in skilled and semi-skilled positions rather than professional ones.

TABLE 7B: MOST FREQUENTLY HELD CURRENT JOBS IN U.S.			
Current Job Held By Field/Industry	N	%	SEI Code
Labor/construction:			
Assembler / Laborer	21	20%	22.68 – 36.50
Beauty care:			
Hair stylist/manicurist	13	12.4%	26.39 – 29.82
Programming:			
Programmer / Senior Programmer	5	4.7%	76.31 – 79.81
Technical/engineering/mechanical:			
Auto mechanic/mechanical	6	5.7%	32.28 – 38.97
Technician	6	5.7%	60.52 – 66.08
Engineer	3	2.8%	86.64 – 87.90
Maintenance Worker	2	1.9%	38.20 – 44.66
Food/clothing industry:			
Cook/Baker	7	6.7%	27.53 – 29.33
Dishwasher	2	1.9%	29.09
Seamstress	2	1.9%	17.11 – 25.52
Housekeeping:			
Maid/custodian	5	4.8%	28.37 – 31.37
Laundry service	2	1.9%	29.21
Civil service:			
Postal worker	2	1.9%	53.90
Office work:			
Clerk/secretary	5	4.8%	33.06 – 38.40
Other	24	22.9%	
TOTAL	105	100%	

* We were able to develop codes for only 105 of the 157 respondents who currently work.

Job Trajectory

To assess the job trajectory over time, we asked each participant to describe every job held since the time of immigration and how they found the job. Very few people indicated that they had more than 3 jobs since arriving to the U.S. (2 held 6 jobs, 3 held 5 jobs, and 7 held 4 jobs), thus we decided to examine job trajectory for the first three jobs and Table 7c shows these data.

Socioeconomic Status (SEI). In general, the SEI code representing the job status grows with each successive job. Thus, in general, the job trajectory for the overall sample is positive in that the refugees attain jobs of higher status over time.

Finding Work. With respect to how jobs are found, the resettlement agency and social service organizations play a decreasing role and the individual self-reliance an increasing role with each successive job. American friends play an increasingly significant role with each successive job. Of importance in general, however, is the role of Vietnamese friends in job finding. Across jobs, they remain stable at between 41% and 48% as resources for new jobs. Indeed, Vietnamese friends play the most important role in job placement, and this is supported by the finding that the majority of the refugees (65% in job #3) continue to have other Vietnamese as colleagues on the job.

TABLE 7C: EMPLOYMENT TRAJECTORY			
	JOB 1	JOB 2	JOB 3
N	142	81	31
SEI code	31.04	32.52	34.32
Average time at job (IN YEARS)	2.9	2.4	2.6
How close is job to specialty in Vietnam (1=exactly, 5=not at all)	4.5	4.6	4.4
Job satisfaction (1=none, 10 = very much)	5.6	5.9	5.3
HOW FOUND JOB:			
Private Employment Agency	2%	.5%	.5%
Resettlement Agency	3%	.5%	0%
Vietnamese Friends	46.5%	48%	40.5%
American friends	5%	7.5%	12.5%
Community-based organization	2%	2.5%	0%
County social services	12%	7.5%	3%
Self/newspaper	15%	25%	25%
Family/relatives	13%	4%	9.5%
Other	1.5%	4.5%	9%
Other émigrés there? Yes	83%	75%	65%

Predictors of Job Status and Job Satisfaction. We also investigated what contributed to both job status and job satisfaction (Table 7d). With respect to job satisfaction, a marginally significant relationship exists such that the higher one's job status, the more satisfied one is with one's job. With respect to current job status (SEI code), level of education in Vietnam, Vietnamese behavioral acculturation, and SEI code of one's first job emerged as significant predictors. That the higher level of education was a significant predictor of current SEI status is not surprising. Further, the status (SEI) of the first job held in the U.S. predicted current SEI. Thus, the status/prestige of the first job these refugees take in the U.S. seems critical in predicting the SEI status of future jobs.

TABLE 7D. Predictors of Economic Adjustment				
Dependent Variable	N (Df)	R²	Significant Predictors	Beta
Current Job Satisfaction	89 (10, 79)	.17	Current SEI Code	.26 ⁺
Current SEI Code	74 (11, 63)	.58***	Education	.24**
			Vietnamese Behavioral Acculturation	-.19*
			Job satisfaction	.15 ⁺
			SEI job 1	.30**
First Job SEI Code	119 (9, 110)	.27***	Time in U.S.	.30**
			English language competence	.23 ⁺

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